

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, April 3, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Ms. Betty (remote), Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone

Board members absent: Mrs. Caramanillo

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools; Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance; Mrs. Keane, Director of Student Services and Special Education; Mr. Brough, Human Resources Specialist; Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology; Mrs. Quarato, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Development; and Mrs. Siegel, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Accountability.

Mrs. Dahlheimer called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Approval of Agenda**

*Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

### **Public Comment - at the beginning of the meeting public comment should refer to items on the agenda**

Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that the regular meeting will adjourn for the public hearing at 7:00 PM and return after the public hearing has concluded.

#### **A. In-person public comment**

Chris Davis, from Durham, stated that she recently learned that the board has decided that all the teachers are moving from classroom to classroom. K, 1 and 4 from Lyman are moving, second grade from Brewster, and third grade from Memorial. She felt that the board expects everyone to move without any support. She noted that some teachers have been in their classrooms for over 20 years and asked everyone to think about their own homes and how difficult it would be to move. Ms. Davis asked if anyone has been in a kindergarten room and wondered how they thought the teachers could pack up their stuff with 5- and 6-year-olds in the room that need constant attention. She added that the teachers are teaching from 8:30 to 3:30 with minimal breaks which they use to answer emails, prepare lessons, contact parents and go to meetings. She asked how the board thought they would be able to pack and teach at the same time. Ms. Davis noted that if the board felt they needed to go in on their own time, that is illegal. She added that they then have to unpack and have their classrooms ready for the first day of school in a new building with new staff members which will be overloaded with meetings. She just doesn't know how the board thinks this can happen and it isn't fair. She would like each board member to take the last week in May and first week in June to join her in covering a teacher's class or going in to pack for them all day for two weeks. Ms. Davis also did not feel this would be best for children with boxes all over the place. She asked if the board wanted to put a kindergarten at a second-grade table, desk and chair. She then asked Dr. Darcy if she was bothering her.

Dr. Darcy commented that Ms. Davis is uninformed which Ms. Davis disagreed with. Dr. Darcy explained that there are plans to support the teachers in moving. Ms. Davis asked that the plans be shared with the teachers because they have not heard of any support. She asked how the teachers will be compensated for their time in planning and moving. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that this will be discussed during the reconfiguration update. Ms. Davis has heard this from teachers at Memorial, Brewster and Lyman and they have been given information that they are to pack while teaching and unpack while teaching.

**B. Remote public comment**

None.

**Approval of Minutes**

- A. Board of Education Work Session - March 6, 2024**
- B. Board of Education Special Work Session - March 13, 2024**
- C. Board of Education Regular Meeting - March 13, 2024**
- D. Board of Education Special Work Session - March 20, 2024**
- E. Board of Education Special Meeting - March 26, 2024**
- F. Board of Education Special Work Session - March 27, 2024**

*Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, to approve the minutes, as listed above.*

*In favor of approving the minutes, as listed above: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

**Superintendent's Report****A. Grade Level Reconfiguration 2024-2025 Update**

Dr. Schuch reported that they have had three successful parent-family visit nights at Brewster, Lyman and Memorial with good participation. Lots of staff voluntarily showed up, both those who are currently at the buildings and those moving as well. More dates will be published so that parents are aware of upcoming events.

Dr. Schuch explained that they have given the staff information in writing with no suggestion of anyone actively packing while they are teaching. He has not heard that any teachers are intending to do that. Movers will be doing the bulk moves for the district and they have set a deadline for Friday of the last week of school in terms of what moves and what stays. Staff can ask their principal about individual items, as needed. Dr. Schuch also noted that they looked at the bargaining agreement and they feel that they are fully within their rights to ask what they are asking of staff. He added that they have received feedback that some teachers want to pack along the way and others want to wait until the end. Teachers are being encouraged, not required, to go through stuff and purge. Dumpsters are at each school. Dr. Schuch did not disagree that this is a challenge for some employees and hits different employees in different ways. Mrs. Neubig added that they met with the union.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked them to touch base with principals and staff to see if anyone was having any issues. Dr. Schuch explained that they meet weekly and get feedback. Mr. Roraback wondered if there was a hesitancy to ask for help. He suggested having assemblies to give teachers a few hours to work on moving. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that they could reach out to the PTOs to get the teachers help.

**B. Other Updates (if applicable)**

Dr. Schuch would like to begin promoting a potential public hearing and referendum date for the Memorial project, along with information about why they believe the three-school option is the best educational and financial decision. He asked the board to consider holding a referendum on June 11, 2024, asking for both the funding and the regional plan amendment. June 11<sup>th</sup> is the day before the last day of school and graduation and the hope is that more people will participate.

Dr. Schuch suggested having the public hearing/district meeting on each referendum question on May 2, 2024. He suggested having a Zoom meeting on Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, to simply schedule the public hearing. If the board approves this, they will start developing and implementing a communication strategy so that the community is aware of why this is so important. Mrs. Neubig reached out to Mr. Malik and he will provide some visuals and suggestions of ways to have this be successful.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that anything earlier than June 11<sup>th</sup> would not be possible and they would not be able to communicate everything effectively. The attorneys have confirmed that the two referendum questions can be done on the same day. They can go back to referendum in September or October if the June referendum doesn't pass. Dr. Schuch recalled that the plan amendment failed and people stated that there was no plan. He felt that the plan amendment has a better chance to pass alongside a capital project. He added that if they both fail, that would mean they need to communicate more. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that she would like to keep these questions separate from the presidential election. She noted that they will begin work on communications and she would like to see something sent to every homeowner on paper and have a presentation available as well.

Ms. Betty noted that Memorial has a huge PTO fund-raiser on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5:00 PM and they miss out on all those families. It is a color fun run and they will probably not show up to a meeting after. Dr. Schuch explained that if they move it to an earlier date, that will be less time to be able to communicate. There is a 30-day lockout period when district funds cannot be used to promote the project. Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested holding the public hearing on May 1<sup>st</sup> instead. Mr. Moore suggested holding the meeting at Memorial, but they would have to work on streaming and audio quality.

Mrs. Neubig added that they can always have the public hearing in the summer, if needed. She felt that September 10<sup>th</sup> would be the latest because there is a 60-day lockout with a presidential election. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that anything over the summer would be out of the question because of vacations.

Mr. Roraback felt that the messaging cannot be tiny slides with tons of details. He would like to see simple animated pictures. He felt that they need to say that if everything stays as it is now, it's just going to go up and up while the quality of education is watered down. They then need to show the new school with all of the reasons why. Mrs. Dahlheimer agreed that the messaging needs to catch people's eyes and they want to read it. Mr. Moore added that \$78 million will unfortunately grab everyone's attention quickly, so they will need to deal with that. Mr. Mennone added that the details are already out there for people to see.

Dr. Schuch reported that Mrs. Siegel successfully defended her doctoral dissertation earlier today for an EdD from the University of Illinois in the program of education policy, organization and leadership with a concentration in global studies in education.

### **Staff Reports**

#### **A. Director of Finance - Kim Neubig**

Mrs. Neubig reported that the general fund is 70 percent expended. All funds have been encumbered and 75 percent of the revenue has been received.

Dr. Schuch then asked if item 7C could be discussed next and there was no objection.

### **New Business**

#### **C. Discussion and Possible Vote on Teacher and Leader Evaluation Plan 2025-2026**

Mrs. Dahlheimer reviewed that the Student Achievement Committee had a very lengthy discussion about the evaluation plan. Mrs. Quarato asked everyone to hold their questions until the end of her presentation.

Mrs. Quarato explained that the PDEC (Professional Development and Evaluation Committee) formed a large subcommittee (30-33 individuals) as well as a smaller subcommittee (10-12 individuals). They have met every month since October and gained suggestions and ideas. A consensus protocol was sent to the PDEC after the final meeting and the results were very positive. The educator and leader plans are pretty similar. She thanked Matt Taber who has served as co-chair and has dedicated a lot of his time.

Looking at the process and timeline for evaluation and goal-setting, every year will start with orientation for all new staff members. Phase 1 will begin with self-reflection, while thinking about the selected standards and student data, learning and progress data and anything in terms of their own instructional practices. They will then develop a goal out of that reflection and come to a mutual agreement on the goal with their evaluator. Feedback will be a huge part of the process.

Ideally, goal-setting will be done by November so that the second phase of elaboration can start. This phase will happen throughout the year and is where the educator/leader is constantly collecting data and doing professional learning aligned to their goal. They will make changes based on what they are learning and the data that is gathered. A mid-year reflection will also be done and changes can be made to the goals. There is no specific deadline for this process, though they would like the mid-year conversations to be done in February.

Phase 3 is the summation phase during the last couple of months of school. This is where everything is brought together, thinking about how their year went and where they want to go in the future. Two- or three-year goals can be changed based on the evidence that was collected and how they did that year. The process ends with an end-of-year reflection and another conversation with the evaluator. A summative report will be provided to the educator, giving more feedback and whether they met their goal or not. Ratings will no longer be used.

Observations will continue, but will look a little different. While individuals are working through the three phases, they are continuously doing professional learning, implementing that new learning, gathering evidence and feedback and using that to go back and do more professional learning. The standards used next year are the same standards that the district has been using. The PDEC felt that it would be too much to differentiate the standards this year, but they do plan to explore that next year.

The corrective action process is implemented if there is a consistent pattern of challenges that have some up. They have already been identified, the staff member has been spoken to and resources and professional learning have been provided. If there is continual struggle, they will go into the developmental support stages that used to be called tiered stages. The committee decided to change the terminology so that it was more meaningful and not confused with what is done for students. Mrs. Quarato then reviewed the three stages of support.

Finally, there is a dispute resolution process that is used in the event that an educator or leader disagrees with something that the evaluator has provided. The hope is that the problem will be resolved informally, but there is a process in place if it is not.

Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that they need to adjourn to the public hearing and will then come back to have discussion.

*Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, to adjourn to public hearing on the budget.*

*In favor of adjourning to public hearing on the budget: Ms. Betty, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

The board returned to the regular meeting and discussion on teacher and leader evaluation plan 2025-2026.

Dr. Darcy asked if any changes were made from the time the board received the plan until now. Mrs. Quarato explained that no changes have been made yet, but she did look at the things that Dr. Darcy mentioned and will do that. Dr. Darcy felt that they couldn't vote on it tonight because there are potential changes to be made. Dr. Darcy would like to see the streamlined version of the rubrics which the state will also want to see. Mrs. Quarato explained that the only difference is the rating scale which has been replaced with to be enhanced, growing, confident and masterful. Dr. Darcy suggested they not use the word "streamlined" for that. She also noted that it references the observation protocol and she would like to see that protocol. Mrs. Quarato explained that the protocols are not listed out, but they plan to train the evaluators during the summer. Mr. Mennone asked who evaluates the evaluators to be sure that they aren't just giving blanket ratings and Mrs. Quarato did not have an answer. Mr. Roraback noted that, in his experience, any new teacher will not be masterful but should be encouraged. Dr. Taber felt that they were under the impression that there were district protocols, but they didn't exist.

Dr. Darcy added that the state has mandated that the plan be in place for the next school year, but there is no exact date. She reiterated that she did not feel comfortable voting on the plan at this point without answers to her email. Dr. Taber noted that he is in regular communication with the Association as he is the building rep.

Mr. Roraback was concerned that the initial goal-setting may be hard to manage in a flexible way. From a teacher's perspective, he finds it attractive to be able to work their goals into professional development and that will benefit the teachers and the administrators. He did feel that parent communication and contact should be an indicator as well. Mr. Moore asked if they anticipate that the state will make changes to the proposed plan. Mrs. Quarato spoke to one of the individuals leading this and was told that as long as it hits all of the required state guidelines, there should be no problem.

Mr. Moore had the impression that this plan is flexible and modifiable. Dr. Darcy would not accept using the word "corrective" for the tiered support because it is not supposed to be remediation. Mrs. Quarato explained that that was what in the district's document last year and is in the state's model plan. Dr. Taber added that the teachers did not push back on that. Mrs. Quarato also thought they could change other wording as well. Mrs. Keane added that the observation form is linked to the plan.

Mrs. Quarato explained that they wanted to get this done quickly in order to bring it to the teachers before May with the goal of August to go through the forms. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if they could vote on this at the April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting and Dr. Schuch wondered if there would be time for PDEC to reconvene. It could, in fact, default to the May meeting.

#### **A. Vote on Teacher Non-Renewals**

Mr. Brough reviewed that this process occurs per state statute and requires that all non-tenured teachers who are not going to be renewed be notified by May 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. This is a budgetary process which allows the district to reduce staff, should that become necessary. Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that this is a formality.

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, that the contract for the employment of Mark Scianna, Kate DeMartino, Michael Brady, Heather Almodovar, Sherry Ferrara, Laurie Clemente, Nicole Coulin, Heather Parente, Victoria Abolafia, Hillary Sirois, Michelle Seward, Shawna Johnson, Jeff Landry, Brianna Tasto, Amanda Romano, Marjorie Bruch, Christine Fourier, Sarah Sportelli, Carly Elman, Jessica Nicola, Amy Ryan, Gloria McClure, Laura Mongillo, Delia Falcon, Cara Kilroy, Cara Urso, Eric Flanagan, Ashley Schwartz, and Polly Abigdala not be renewed for the following school year and that the Superintendent of Schools is directed to advise each of the persons in writing of this action.*

*In favor of the above motion: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

#### **B. Vote on Healthy Food Initiative and Food Exemptions**

*Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to require participation in the healthy food option of HFC pursuant to CGS, section 10-21.5.f, the Board of Education of Regional School District 13 certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs and any fund-raising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups.*

Mr. Roraback noted that this applies to school hours.

*In favor of requiring participation in the healthy food option of HFC pursuant to CGS, section 10-21.5.f, the Board of Education of Regional School District 13 certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in schools under its jurisdiction and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from the reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs and any fund-raising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

*Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, for combined food and beverage exemptions. The Board of Education of Regional School District 13 will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in section 10-221.q of the Connecticut General Statutes, provided that the following conditions are met: (1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; (2) the sale is at the location of the event; and (3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An event is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays and interscholastic debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals and debate team meetings are not. The regular school day is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. Location means where the event is being held and must be at the same place as the food and beverage sales.*

*In favor of approving the motion for combined food and beverage exemptions. The Board of Education of Regional School District 13 will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in section 10-221.q of the Connecticut General Statutes, provided that the following conditions are met: (1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; (2) the sale is at the location of the event; (3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An event is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays and interscholastic debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals and debate team meetings are not. Regular school day is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. Location means where the event is being held and must be at the same place as the food and beverage sales: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

#### **D. Policy Review:**

##### **1. First read:**

- a. Admission Ages of Attendance 5111
- b. Admission to the Public Schools at or Before Age Five - Shipman
- c. Nepotism 4112.8
- d. Administrative Regulations 9313
- e. Adoption of Policies 9132

- f. Board Member Request for Information 9231
- g. BOE Code of Ethics 9271
- h. Committees - Standing Committees 9130
- I. Community Member Committee Participation 9110.1
- j. Conflict of Interest 9270
- k. Policy and Regulation Systems 9312
- l. Policy Formation 9311
- m. Requests for Information by Board Members 9325.5 CABE
- n. Role of Board and Members - Shipman
- o. Role of the Board and Members 9000
- p. Special Committees-Board of Education 9133
- q. Suspension of Policies Bylaws and Regulations 9314
- r. Suspension of Policies, Bylaws or Regulations - Shipman

Mr. Moore reviewed all proposed changes, additions and deletions to the above-listed policies.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **A. Policy Committee Meeting - March 20, 2024**

Mr. Moore reported that the Policy Committee met and discussed the above-listed policies.

#### **B. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - March 27, 2024**

The Student Achievement Committee met and reviewed the Teacher and Leader Evaluation Plan for 2025-2026.

### **Board Communications and Professional Development**

Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that she has received a good amount of communication about the flooding in the auditorium. Mrs. Neubig noted that there have been three water events in the auditorium, with the most significant one being the one that canceled the play and postponed National Honor Society and the sports ceremony. They found an inlet that was not visible and overgrown and filled with sediment. For the play weekend, they brought in sandbags and did hourly building checks. On the day of the play, the water was up to the door but was controlled. It was actually coming up from the concrete floor at that point. The catch basin outside had been cleaned after the last rain event, but that wasn't the issue this time. The whole student parking lot completely flooded. Equipment was brought in and everything was cleaned out. The total cost was between \$3,000 and \$5,000. The Building Inspector did come in and verified the stage did not have any structural damage. The air quality was tested and results came back normal. Mrs. Neubig added that there was no damage to the carpet because of the quick action of the custodial and facilities staff as well as other staff members. The carpet has all been sanitized as well. Both National Honor Society and the sports teams are working on rescheduling their events. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that they unfortunately could not reschedule the last performance of the play.



**2024-2025 Budget**

- A. Discussion on Public Hearing/District Meeting**
- B. Finalize Budget for Annual Meeting**

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. DelVecchio, to go to District Meeting on May 6, 2024 at 7:00 PM in the Coginchaug Auditorium, followed by a referendum on May 7, 2024 from 6:00 AM until 8:00 PM at the Durham Community Center and the Middlefield Community Center for the 2024-2025 Regional School District gross education budget of \$40,879,195.*

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if anyone had changes, additions or deletions to the budget. Dr. Darcy thanked everyone who wrote to the board about the math position at the high school. Mrs. Dahlheimer agreed that there were a lot of heartfelt explanations and very detailed asks. She, too, thanked everyone who gave their comments. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that she has tried very hard to reach out and collaborate with the towns.

*In favor of going to District Meeting on May 6, 2024 at 7:00 PM in the Coginchaug Auditorium, followed by a referendum on May 7, 2024 from 6:00 AM until 8:00 PM at the Durham Community Center and the Middlefield Community Center for the 2024-2025 Regional School District gross education budget of \$40,879,195: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

**Public Comment**

- A. In-person public comment**

None.

- B. Remote public comment**

None.

**Adjournment**

*Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.*

*In favor of adjourning the regular meeting of the Board of Education: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

Meeting was adjourned at 8:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz  
 Alwaz First